

DISPATCH

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FROM Chief of Base, Bonn

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REFERENCE(S)

1. We transmit herewith for Headquarters information a selection of press clippings covering the current controversy surrounding the BfV. For the convenience of the addressees we will summarize briefly the developments and some of the background.

2. The 1 September issue of Stern magazine which appeared on 27 August contained an expose, by Stern Bonn correspondent Peter STAEHLE, of BfV staffer Eric WENGER'S SS background in an article entitled "The Man Without a Name". STAEHLE did not mention WENGER'S name because the BfV's GERKEN had reminded him six months previously of several court decisions which judged revelation of an operational BfV official's identity together with his specific function to be tantamount to treason. However, follow-up newspaper articles on 28 August identified both WENGER and STRUEBLING as BfV officials with SS background. (Comment: It is most unlikely that criminal proceedings will be initiated against any of the press organs for this action because the specific duties of WENGER and STRUEBLING were not mentioned.) On the same day the Interior Ministry explained to the press that less than two percent of the BfV employees held SS ranks during the Nazi period and these were hired only after careful investigation to insure against hiring anyone who was suspected of having committed crimes under the Nazi regime. The 6 September issue of the Hamburg weekly Die Zeit which appeared on 5 September carried a second article by Peter STAEHLE attacking WENGER and other BfV staffers with SS background. In addition the article accused the BfV of employing among its investigative techniques such illegal practices as telephone taps and mail censorship. According to the article this is accomplished through collusion with the Western allies who have retained this right from the occupation period. WENGER was singled out as one of the principal conspirators in this illegal activity. The ramifications of this article including subsequent press reaction have been covered in cable traffic and will not be treated further here. Furthermore, it appears that the affair is yet far from closed.

3. When the BfV was created considerable difficulty was encountered in finding qualified employees untainted with an SS past. Accordingly, a limited number of persons of such background were employed, some of them initially on a contract basis. In some cases this BfV practice was opposed by the Allies in others it was tolerated. Later, when the Federal Republic regained her sovereignty and BfV personnel practices were no longer subject to Allied review, some of the contract employees, among them WENGER, were given staff status. As early as 1953 the appropriate parliamentary committees were briefed on this practice, and they offered no objections. According to BfV officials this briefing included identity and background of the personnel in question. Thus, no specific effort was made to conceal the fact that these persons were employed by the BfV. However, the SAEWECKE and FELFE cases stimulated journalistic interest in former Nazis in the intelligence and security services. It is strongly suspected that this interest was further inspired by enemies of WENGER within the BfV who leaked information to the press. After appearance of the newspaper articles on 27 and 28 August the BfV contacted Herbert WEHNER to sound him out on the SPD's attitude on the issue of former SS personalities in the BfV. According to the BfV's Dr. NOLLAU, WEHNER gave firm assurance that the SPD would create no difficulties for the BfV. The issue has, of course, now been further complicated by linking the presence of former SS personalities in the BfV with charges of employment of illegal investigative practices. So

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far both President SCHREIBERS and the Interior Ministry have taken the position that, barring the introduction of new derogatory information on any of the personalities in question, there would be no reversal of the decision made some years ago to employ them. However, the responsible Interior Ministry officials are easily unseated by publicity such as that recently experienced, and the added charge of illegal investigative techniques will require considerable smoothing influence from the BfV vis-a-vis the Interior Ministry. Should the pressure of public opinion as voiced by the press become great enough to bring the issue to the floor of the Bundestag, sufficient pressure could conveniently be generated to force a transposition of the persons in question to government agencies less intimately involved in the protection of the democratic order. Most of the personalities involved have official status which virtually eliminates the possibility of ~~discharge~~ ^{discharge}. Nevertheless, the loss of several of the persons in question, particularly WENGER, would be sorely felt by the BfV. At the same time it is difficult to imagine that any such action could be initiated unless it were applied uniformly to all persons with similar background in other intelligence and security agencies including the BND, the LfVs and all criminal police agencies.

4. Already in April 1963 when the BfV became aware that an exposé on WENGER was being threatened by Stern reporter Peter STAHLER, several of the key BfV staffers suspected that the threat was inspired by an enemy of WENGER within the BfV, probably one of WENGER's own subordinates. The recent article in Die Zeit clearly demonstrates that these suspicions were well founded. Furthermore STAHLER confirmed to ^{that his sources were} individuals with inside knowledge. (Details of STAHLER's remarks were reported in Bonn 5151) Even before the recent rash of publicity the BfV's Richard GERKEN informed us that he had narrowed his list of suspects to three or four. WENGER is not only one of the most competent staffers in the BfV but also one of the most dedicated. He admits however, in conclusion, doubt rather firmly with some of his less inspired and less energetic subordinates. These are among the prime suspects on GERKEN's list. It would appear that there may well be a conspiracy involving several BfV staffers intent upon unseating WENGER, and that these persons are simultaneously feeding material to several different press organs.

5. Further details on the telephone and mail intercept aspects of this affair are being reported separately.

Attachment h/w

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